

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 291725Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5323

INFO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SGEN, PE

SUBJECT: QUECHUA DECLARED OFFICIAL LANGUAGE TOO

1. THE CREATION OF A NEW PERU ADVANCED FURTHER ON MAY 27, WHEN THE CABINET DECREED THAT QUECHUA WILL HENCEFORTH BE RECOGNIZED AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE ALONG WITH SPANISH. THE DECREE STATES THAT THE GOP WISHES TO TRANSFORM THE CULTURAL BASES OF THE COUNTRY, SEEKING THE INTEGRATION OF PERUVIANS AND THEREBY STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL CONSCIENCE. IT CONTINUES THAT QUECHUA IS AN ANCESTRAL TONGUE WHICH IS SPOKEN BY A LARGE NUMBER OF PERUVIANS, WHO ARE UNAWARE OF THEIR RIGHTS AND DUTIES FOR REASONS OF LANGUAGE. THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT DECLARES THAT IT IS A MORAL OBLIGATION TO SAVE QUECHUA IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL UNITY. DECREE STATES THAT QUECHUA MUST BE TAUGHT AT ALL SCHOOL LEVELS BEGINNING IN 1976. IT ADDS THAT LEGAL DISPUTES WHEN BOTH SIDES SPEAK QUECHUA WILL BE IN THAT LANGUAGE AFTER JANUARY 1, 1977.

2. COMMENT: MANY IN LIMA'S SPANISH-SPEAKING MIDDLE CLASS AND EVEN LOWER CLASS "CHOLOS" (PERSONS OF MIXED INDIAN-WHITE ANCESTRY WHO HAVE ADOPTED WESTERN DRESS AND SPANISH) ARE COMPLAINING ABOUT THIS ACTION, WHICH THEY FEEL IS RETROGRESSIVE AND AMOUNTS TO GIVING THE COUNTRY BACK TO THE INDIANS. FROM HISTORICAL POINT OF VIEW, HOWEVER, THIS ACTION FINALLY "LEGITIMIZES" PERU'S INDIAN

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HERITAGE AND FITS IN WITH THE DECLARED OBJECTIVE OF THE PERUVIAN

REVOLUTION TO BRING PERU'S FORGOTTEN MASSES INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF AFFAIRS. FOR THIS TO TAKE PLACE THERE MUST BE FAR GREATER COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PERU'S QUECHUA SPEAKERS (MOST OF WHOM LIVE IN THE MOUNTAINS) AND ITS SPANISH SPEAKERS. APPROXIMATELY 30 PERCENT OF ALL PERUVIANS SPEAK QUECHUA, ALTHOUGH A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF THESE, PARTICULARLY THE YOUNGER GENERATION, ALSO SPEAK SOME SPANISH; APPROXIMATELY 10 PERCENT, IN THE PUNO REGION, SPEAK AYMARA, NOT QUECHUA, AS THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGE.

3. HOWEVER, MANDATORY REQUIREMENT THAT QUECHUA BE TAUGHT THROUGHOUT THE REPUBLIC BEGINNING NEXT YEAR IN ALL THE SCHOOLS WILL PLACE FURTHER DRAIN ON PERU'S INADEQUATE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, AND PROBABLY AMOUNT TO MISALLOCATION OF RESOURCES (PARTICULARLY IN POPULATED COASTAL REGION WHICH HAS FEW QUECHUA SPEAKERS) THAT COULD BE PUT TO BETTER USE TEACHING OTHER SUBJECTS. THE GOVERNMENT'S TASK WILL BE COMPLICATED BY THE WIDE VARIETY OF QUECHUA DIALECTS WHICH ARE SPOKEN IN PERU. ACCORDING TO A GOP OFFICIAL CUZCO'S DIALECT HAS BEEN CHOSEN AS THE OFFICIAL ONE.
DEAN

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